DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 345 843 PS 020 511

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TITLE Using "Developmentally Appropriate Practice" (1987) for Teacher Self-Assessment and Attitudinal Congruence.
PUB DATE 92
NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Educational Research Association (Hilton Head, SC, March 1992).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Elementary School Teachers; Primary Education; Program Evaluation; *Self Evaluation (Individuals); *Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Evaluation
IDENTIFIERS *Developmentally Appropriate Programs; National Association Educ of Young Children

ABSTRACT

A 1987 publication of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), "Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth Through Age 8" (DAP), postulated that programs for young children should be based on a balance between expectations for age level and individual differences. The present document reports the results of research that addressed two questions concerning the NAEYC publication: (1) Does DAP have value as a self-assessment instrument for early childhood practitioners? and (2) To what extent do early childhood practitioners agree with NAEYC's judgments of appropriateness and inappropriateness? Lists of either 23 or 37 items paired as appropriate-inappropriate criteria in DAP were used as the source texts of a survey instrument. Data were collected from 16 kindergarten and 33 primary teachers (out of 24 kindergarten and 66 primary teachers who received the instrument). On a 7-point scale ranging from "appropriate" to "inappropriate" for each item, respondents marked where their practices fell and where they would like their practices to fall. Results revealed kindergarten teachers' predilection for teacher-centered, whole group, and passive learner instruction; and primary teachers' preference for grades, regular testing, retention, and report cards. The fact that 88 percent of kindergarten teachers' item responses and 73 percent of primary teachers' item responses indicated a desire for change implies that DAP has value as a self-assessment tool. (8 tables) (BC)

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USING DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICE (1987) FOR TEACHER SELF-ASSESSMENT AND ATTITUDINAL CONGRUENCE

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Fore, D.A. (1992, March).Using Developmentally Appropriate Practice (1987) for teacher self-assessment and attitudinal congruence. Paper presented at the meeting of the Eastern Educational Research Association, Hilton Head, SC.

The described research is designed to answer two related questions regarding NAEYC's publication Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children From Birth Through Age 8 (1987, S. Bredekamp (Ed.)):

(a) Does DAP have value as a self-assessment instrument for the early childhood practioner?

(b) To what degree does the early childhood practioner agree with what NAEYC considers as "appropriate - inappropriate"?

Given the positive reception by the early childhood community to both editions of DAP and the fact that its underlying premise of designing programs for young children based upon a balance between age-level expectation and individual differences is finding its way into the general public as well as onto legislative agenda; and given the representative breadth and depth of the initial authoring commission and the sound research base of both editions, the present researcher has sought to expand the potential usefulness of the basic document. Question (a) above derives from the document itself: "Use this publication to assess your own teaching." (p. 85); whereas question (b) derives from this researcher's generalized questioning as to the degree of relative agreement ("congruence") between the expressed attitudes of the EC classroom teacher and those of a major EC professional organization.

Permission was secured from NAEYC to use DAP for research purposes. The 23- and 37-item paired "Appropriate - Inappropriate" criteria for kindergarten and primary teachers, respectively, were used verbatim as the source text of a survey instrument. To minimize response predisposition, the source document itself was not mentioned, but rather identified only as the "Early Childhood Practices Inventory." To minimize response set, the paired items were randomized for serial order and polarity. The hypothetical continuum between the "Appropriate - Inappropriate" polar end points was operationalized as a 7-point semantic differential-like field. The respondent was asked to read each pair and mark the blank that best indicated (a) where s/he would be, and (b) would like to be. The responses were placed on a separate response sheet, to which was appended a cover sheet with instructions as well as a second sheet with basic demographic questions for subsequent respondent profiling. The instrument was piloted with ten respondents providing anecdotal information regarding the instrument, the directions, and the process as a whole.

Primary data source was K-3 teachers in five area elementary and primary schools, representing three separate school systems. Personal contact with each principal secured permission for the researcher to request the assistance of K-3 faculty with the survey. A total of 24 K-level packets and 66 primary (1-3) was distributed. Teachers participated voluntarily and anonymously.

Forms were picked up 2-3 weeks later. Of the 90 total distributed, 57 were returned (KGN: 19, PRIM: 38), of which 49 were useable (KGN: 16, PRIM: 33). A secondary data source, M. Ed. students currently enrolled in the researcher's upper division ECE graduate class, is being surveyed as part of class activity. Unlike the primary source, however, these K-4 teachers are being asked to respond to both instruments (on separate evenings), rather than just the one that reflects their current grade-level teaching assignment.

Values of 1-7 were assigned to the seven blanks of each (a) and (b) item pair, representing response choices from "Inappropriate" to "Appropriate," respectively. Totals were tallied by respondent for both (a) and (b) for each paired item as well as for the total instrument. A t-test for dependent variables was used to compare mean scores for (a) and (b) by item and instrument total. With an alpha-level of .05, significant differences between (a) and (b) were found in the initial data source as follows: on the KGN instrument, with 17 of the 23 items (88%) and for the entire instrument; on the PRIM instrument, with 27 of the 37 items (73%), as well as the entire instrument. (Data collection from the secondary source is still in progress.) Subsequent rank-ordering by t-values of the (a)(b) pairs (see Tables 1 and 4), as well as rank-ordering of individual means for current ("Actual") attitudes (see Tables 2 and 5), yielded no discernable clustering in the response choices.

Examination of preferred ("Desired") response choices, however, did reveal an interesting clustering at the low end of both Tables 3 and 6. In Table 3, choices by Kindergarten teachers seem to indicate a predilection toward teacher-centered, whole group, passive learner instruction (DAP items number 6, 9, and 7); while Table 6 shows a relative primary level preference for grades, regular testing, retention, and report cards (DAP items 26, 26, 29, and 28). Additionally, Tables 7 and 8 present two response anomalies with respective frequencies: those items for which the respondent selected a change position less desirable than the current one ("Reversals"); and those items for which the respondent chose the least desirable position to reflect current attitude and chose to remain there for the preferred choice ("Straight 1's").

Given that, for 88% of the KGN items and 73% of the PRIM, respondent choice indicated a statistically significant desire for positive change, these results would seem to indicate value in the use of DAP for self-assessment; while comparisons of individual item (b) ("would like to be") responses to the hypothetical ideal ("Appropriate") of 7 yields an interesting profile of which items, and to what relative degree, the practioner agrees with the profession.

Although NAEYC provides the caregiver in childcare programs seeking accreditation through its National Academy of Early Childhood Programs a 3-point response-choice questionnaire regarding instructional practices, policies, etc., as part of the

center's self study, the researcher knows of no similar analog of DAP for the primary school teacher. With the advent of programs for 4-year-olds in public schools and the collaboration between SACS and NAEYC for primary-level accreditation standards, the need for a useful self-assessment tool for the classroom teacher seems greater than ever. The fact that items derive directly from the DAP source document should facilitate developing inservice training at the local level. The major drawback with this instrument, the time need to complete (KGN: 15-20 minutes; PRIM: 25-30 minutes), would be mollified somewhat by the nature and purpose of an institutional self-study, i.e., the incentive to be as thorough and as practical as possible.

This research is being broadened to include use of the present instrument to measure preservice teacher attitudes in a pre-, post-test paradigm as one indicator of teacher preparation program effectiveness. The researcher likewise sees value in developing similar instruments to assess the infant, toddler, and 3-year-old criteria in DAP, and plans to work toward developing same.

Table 1

Rank Order by *t*-Value, Kindergarten Instrument (With p)

p	*t*-Value	Item no.	p	p	Item no.
.0001	6.61	Instr.	.05	2.42	4
	5.74	11		2.08	3
	5.37	14		1.96	16
.001	5.17	18	> .05	1.74	9
	4.58	(12 (17		1.46	10
				1.00	22
	4.52	23		.89	20
	4.39	5		.75	13
	4.37	15			
	4.34	21			
	4.04	19			
	4.03	1			
.01	3.58	8			
	3.57	7			
	3.22	6			
	3.17	2			

Table 2

Rank Order by Mean (Actual), Kindergarten Instrument

Mean	Item no.	Mean	Item no.
6.38	10	5.50	{5 {19
6.19	16		
6.13	3	5.38	{4 {15
6.06	20	5.25	14
5.88	13	5.19	{6 {11
5.80	22	5.00	17
5.75	21	4.75	9
5.67	1	4.67	18
5.56	{8 {12	4.44	{7 {23
5.53	2		

$\bar{X}$Mean: 5.44
Median: 5.545

Table 3

Rank Order by Mean (Desired), Kindergarten Instrument

Mean	Item no.	Mean	Item no.
6.88	23	6.38	20
6.75	15	6.25	5
6.63	{10 {12 {16 {21	6.13	{4 {8 {13
6.56	11	6.06	17
6.53	1	5.94	6
6.50	14	5.73	18
6.44	{3 {19	5.44	9
6.40	{2 {22	5.25	7

$\bar{X}$Mean: 6.29
Median: 6.39

Table 4

Rank Order by *t*-Value, Primary Instrument (With p)

p	*t*-value	Item no.	p	*t*-value	Item no.
.0001	5.85	4	.01	2.97	13
	5.30	Instr.		2.75	8
	5.06	28		2.67	21
	5.01	25		2.58	1
	4.65	6	.05	2.38	7
	4.57	26		2.28	29
	4.45	11		2.24	31
	4.39	5		1.77	27
.001	4.30	23		1.69	19
	4.11	3	>.05	1.53	15
	4.09	10		1.52	2
	3.92	14		1.46	9
	3.86	35		1.44	16
	3.75	30		1.32	18
	3.55	33		1.16	37
.01	3.48	36		1.05	20
	3.32	12		.99	24
	3.22	22		.89	32
	3.17	17		.85	34

Table 5

Rank Order by Mean (Actual), Primary Instrument

Mean	Item no.	Mean	Item no.
5.82	32	4.48	{11 {30
5.64	37	4.36	23
5.58	20	4.33	33
5.55	34	4.27	6
5.42	24	4.24	12
5.36	9	4.21	10
5.33	{15 {18	4.18	5
5.24	7	4.06	3
5.15	13	4.00	31
5.06	8	3.97	4
5.00	16	3.94	27
4.94	2	3.88	29
4.91	{1 {22	3.55	36
4.88	19	3.52	14
4.82	{25 {35	3.18	28
		3.09	26
4.55	{17 {21		

$\bar{X}$Mean: 4.61
Median: 4.515

Table 6

Rank Order by Mean (Desired), Primary Instrument

Mean	Item no.	Mean	Item no.
6.24	13, 30, 35	5.82	12
		5.76	5
6.21	6, 22, 25	5.73	17
		5.70	23, 33
6.12	32	5.58	2, 10, 19, 21
6.09	7, 37		
6.03	8	5.52	16
6.00	9, 11, 36	5.39	28
		5.36	14
5.97	20	4.94	31
5.94	1	4.85	29
5.91	4	4.76	27
5.88	8, 24	4.73	26
5.85	3, 15, 34		

$\bar{X}$Mean: 5.76
Median: 5.82

Table 7

Data Anomalies, Kindergarten Instrument, by Item no. (with *f*)

Reversals	Straight "1"'s
2	3
4	7 (2)
9	8
13	9
16	17

Table 8

Data Anomalies, Primary Instrument, by Item no. (with f)

Reversals		Straight "1"'s
1 (2)	19 (3)	26
2 (7)	20 (2)	
3 (3)	21 (4)	
4	22 (3)	
5 (3)	23 (2)	
6	24 (4)	
7 (4)	26	
8 (4)	27 (6)	
9 (6)	28	
10 (3)	29 (8)	
11 (2)	30	
12 (5)	31 (6)	
13 (2)	32 (5)	
14 (4)	33	
15 (3)	34 (4)	
16 (3)	35	
17 (4)	36 (2)	
18 (5)	37 (4)	